

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Previously Presented) A ball catcher for selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, the ball catcher comprising a substantially cylindrical body having a main bore running axially therethrough, at least a portion of the main bore being restrained to a first and a second bore running axially therethrough, the first and second bores being parallel and wherein the first bore includes restriction means at an end thereof, wherein the first and second bores are partially overlapping to provide a channel therebetween.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The ball catcher as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the main bore is located centrally on the body.
4. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The ball catcher as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the portion of the main bore includes an entry port, the entry port having a first aperture equal to the diameter of the first bore and a second aperture having a diameter less than the diameter of the first bore, the apertures being aligned with the first and second bores respectively.
5. – 8. (Cancelled)
9. (Currently Amended) A method of selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, comprising the steps:
  - (a) inserting in a tool string a ball catcher including ~~[[a]] first bore having retaining means~~ and ~~[[a]] second parallel bores passing therethrough, the first bore having retaining means,~~ the bores including an overlapping portion to provide a channel therebetween;
  - (b) dropping a first ball of a first diameter through the tool string;
  - (c) directing the first ball into the first bore; and
  - (d) retaining the first ball in the first bore.

10. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the method further includes the steps of:
  - (a) dropping a second ball of a second diameter, the second diameter being smaller than the first diameter through the tool string;
  - (b) directing the second ball into the first bore;
  - (c) passing the second ball through the channel into the second bore; and
  - (d) releasing the second ball from the ball catcher into the tool string.
11. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the method further includes the steps:
  - (a) dropping a second ball of a second diameter, the second diameter being smaller than the first diameter through the tool string;
  - (b) passing the second ball through the second bore; and
  - (c) releasing the second ball from the ball catcher into the tool string.
12. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the method includes the step of passing a tool through the second bore into the tool string below the ball catcher.
13. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the method includes the step of actuating a tool above the ball catcher with the first ball.
14. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the method includes the step of actuating a tool below the ball catcher with the second ball.
15. (Previously Presented) A ball catcher for selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, the ball catcher comprising a substantially cylindrical body having a main bore running axially therethrough, at least a portion of the main bore being restrained to a first and a second bore running axially therethrough, the first and second bores being parallel and wherein the first bore includes restriction means at an end thereof, wherein the portion of the main bore includes an entry port, the entry port having a first aperture equal to the diameter of the first bore and a second aperture having a diameter less than the diameter of the first bore, the apertures being

aligned with the first and second bores respectively, and wherein the entry port is inclined with respect to the main bore.

16. (Currently Amended) A ball catcher for selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, the ball catcher comprising a substantially cylindrical body having a main bore running axially therethrough, at least a portion of the main bore being restrained to a first and a second bore running axially therethrough, the first and second bores being parallel, wherein the first bore includes restriction means at an end thereof and the first and second bores are partially overlapping to provide a channel therebetween, and wherein the portion of the main bore includes an entry port, the entry port having a first aperture equal to the diameter of the first bore and a second aperture having a diameter less than the diameter of the first bore, the apertures being aligned with the first and second bores respectively, and wherein the second aperture has a diameter substantially equal to a width of the channel.

17. (Currently Amended) A ball catcher for selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, the ball catcher comprising a substantially cylindrical body having a main bore running axially therethrough, at least a portion of the main bore being restrained to a first and a second bore running axially therethrough, the first and second bores being parallel and wherein the first bore includes restriction means at an end thereof, wherein the first and second bores are partially overlapping to provide a channel therebetween, and wherein said portion of the main bore is restrained by a third bore coaxially aligned with the first bore and having a diameter less than the diameter of the first bore.

18. (Currently Amended) A ball catcher for selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, the ball catcher comprising a substantially cylindrical body having a main bore running axially therethrough, at least a portion of the main bore being restrained to a first and a second bore running axially therethrough, the first and second bores being parallel and wherein the first bore includes restriction means at an end thereof, wherein the first and second bores are partially overlapping to provide a channel therebetween, and wherein the second bore is located centrally on the body.

19. (New) A method of selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, comprising the steps:

- (a) inserting in a tool string a ball catcher including first and second parallel bores passing therethrough, the first bore having retaining means, the bores including an overlapping portion to provide a channel therebetween;
- (b) dropping a first ball of a first diameter through the tool string;
- (c) directing the first ball into the first bore;
- (d) retaining the first ball in the first bore;
- (e) dropping a second ball of a second diameter, the second diameter being smaller than the first diameter through the tool string;
- (f) directing the second ball into the first bore;
- (g) passing the second ball through the channel into the second bore; and
- (h) releasing the second ball from the ball catcher into the tool string.

20. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 19, wherein the method includes the step of actuating a tool below the ball catcher with the second ball.

21. (New) A method of selectively retaining drop balls in a tool string, comprising the steps:

- (a) inserting in a tool string a ball catcher including first and second parallel bores passing therethrough, the first bore having retaining means, the bores including an overlapping portion to provide a channel therebetween;
- (b) dropping a first ball of a first diameter through the tool string;
- (c) directing the first ball into the first bore;
- (d) retaining the first ball in the first bore;
- (e) dropping a second ball of a second diameter, the second diameter being smaller than the first diameter through the tool string;
- (f) passing the second ball through the second bore; and
- (g) releasing the second ball from the ball catcher into the tool string.

22. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 21, wherein the method includes the step of actuating a tool below the ball catcher with the second ball.